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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [IS KMDR MEDIA REACTION REPORT](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

Mideast

Key stories in the media:

Leading media (banner in Maariv) cited a U.S. administration warning regarding the findings of the Sasson report on illegal outposts, which says that successive Israeli governments have violated the law over the past 12 years. Maariv quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice as saying, following her meeting with FM Silvan Shalom Tuesday, that it is not possible to constantly recall the Palestinians' commitments to dismantle the infrastructure of terror, and that Israel must abide by its own commitments and evacuate the illegal settlements. Israel Radio reported that Secretary Rice told FM Shalom that Israel must respect

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the commitments it made at the Sharm el-Sheikh summit. Jerusalem Post quoted a Shalom spokesman as saying that Secretary Rice did not mention the Sasson report.

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Shalom told Israel Radio that Israel has already dismantled dozens of outposts and that it is in the process of completing the process. Ha'aretz recalls that at their last meeting, Secretary Rice told senior Sharon adviser Dov Weisglass that President Bush expects Jerusalem to take immediate action based on the conclusions and recommendations of the report. Ha'aretz reported that Shalom asked Secretary Rice that there be no shift in the West's stance, and that she agreed. Ha'aretz also reported that Shalom raised anew Israel's request to cancel the American travel advisory warning U.S. citizens not to travel to Israel, and that Secretary Rice responded that her department would

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consider ways to do so.

Major media (lead story in Ha'aretz) reported that PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz reached an agreement last night on the handover of security responsibility in Jericho and Tulkarm to the Palestinians in a few days. Abbas said the PA expects that the area to be handed over will include the outlying villages around the cities, and not just the cities. Mofaz said that the negotiations between the sides must proceed cautiously and "step by step," with the security of Israel's citizens "the uppermost priority for us." He demanded that the Palestinians take more action to disarm the terror groups and arrest activists. Israel Radio quoted Jibril Rajoub, the security adviser to Abbas, as saying that all the Palestinian factions have agreed to a total cessation of attacks both inside and beyond the Green Line, that Hamas will participate in this summer's Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) elections, that Hamas is prepared to integrate the PLO, and that the ball now is in the Israeli court. The radio says that Rajoub's message to Israel is that it has a partner. Ha'aretz quoted Abbas as saying Tuesday that the Palestinians would only carry out security reforms if there is progress toward establishing a Palestinian state.

Israel Radio reported that Mofaz will visit Cairo on Thursday upon the invitation of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

Ha'aretz reported that four "rebel" Likud MKs in the

Knesset's Finance Committee may vote in favor of the budget in the committee vote next week if their demands for additional funding for their pet projects are met - and if they do so, it will remove the last obstacle to passing the budget through the committee. For its part, Yediot reported that the group intends to vote in favor of the budget at the committee, but focus their opposition in the plenum vote in late March. The newspaper, which quoted Sharon associates as saying that Shinui will vote in favor of the budget in the plenum vote in order to bring about the implementation of disengagement, cited a denial by senior Shinui members. Jerusalem Post and other media reported that the Likud has already begun preparing for elections that would be held automatically if the budget does not pass by March 31. Yediot bannered, and Israel Radio cited, a harsh verbal attack made Tuesday on PM Sharon by Shas party mentor Rabbi Ovadia Yosef. Rabbi Yosef said that Sharon was "cruel" and "wicked," and expressed his wish that Sharon receive a blow from God and die. Rabbi Yosef's comments came after a meeting with the settler rabbis who criticized the disengagement plan. On the other hand, Rabbi Yosef refused to endorse a national referendum on disengagement. Maariv quoted Finance Minister Binyamin Netanyahu as saying Tuesday that the Likud could split if such a referendum not take place.

Ha'aretz quoted IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon as saying Tuesday at a conference on Low-Intensity Warfare that the new Palestinian leadership has made the decision not to use terrorism as a "political tool," but that the PA must also reinforce the concept of one rule in the territories. Jerusalem Post quoted him as saying at the same venue that Israel intends to phase out all Palestinian laborers within the next three years "because of what has happened here in the last four and a half years."

Ha'aretz reported that Ambassador Dan Kurtzer has conveyed a message to the Foreign Ministry asking Israel to stop making statements about the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon. The newspaper says that FM Shalom turned such a demand into the centerpiece of his latest visit to the U.S. and that Washington believes that such comments are detrimental to American interests in the region. Similarly, Ha'aretz cited the United States' displeasure with reports that Israel is demanding that the U.S. and Europe not reduce their pressure for a complete withdrawal of both Syrian forces and the Iranian Revolutionary Guards. All media reported on, and Jerusalem Post led with, a demonstration attended by hundreds of thousands of Lebanese in downtown Beirut Tuesday, in an overwhelming show of power and support for Syria. The media highlighted a speech Hizbullah leader Sheikh Nasrallah made at the rally, in which he blasted Israel and the U.S. Leading media quoted President Bush as saying Tuesday: "Freedom will prevail in Lebanon."

Jerusalem Post reported that U.S. security envoy Lt. Gen. William Ward, accompanied by a staff of nearly two dozen, is expected to arrive within a week to begin helping the PA reorganize its security apparatus.

Jerusalem Post cited the satisfaction of Israeli and Jewish circles over President Bush's appointment Monday of U/S John Bolton as U.S. ambassador to the UN.

Former PM Ehud Barak was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post that if the security fence is not built around the settlement blocs soon, Ariel, Ma'aleh Adumim, and the Etzion Bloc could end up outside the country's final borders.

Israel Radio reported that security forces have defused an explosive charge in Rafah, along the border with Egypt. The radio also reported that a Qassam rocket was launched at the Gaza Strip settlement of Gadid. There were no casualties.

A senior PA security official was quoted as saying in an interview with Jerusalem Post on Tuesday that the PA has decided to impose restrictions on preachers who deliver Friday sermons in West Bank and Gaza mosques. Under the new restrictions, preachers would not be able to deliver sermons that have not been authorized by the PA, in an effort to curb incitement.

All media reported that on Tuesday, the Fraud Squad questioned the deputy to the CEO and the man in charge of international private banking at Bank Hapoalim regarding the alleged money-laundering affair. Leading media reported that a senior official or even the head of a CIS state (according to Israel Radio, possibly a minister in Kazakhstan), may have maintained an account

at the bank for the purpose of laundering funds.

Maariv published the results of a Kan/Bar-Ilan University poll conducted among 16- to 18-year-olds: -48 percent say they are right wing; 18 percent say they are left wing; 14 percent identify with the political center. -20 percent of the youngsters (13 percent of the secular ones and 36 percent of the religious ones) say they will refuse to evacuate settlements. -42 percent (42 percent of the secular ones and 29 percent of the religious ones) do not want to serve in the territories.

Mideast:

Summary:

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv: "Since 1992, when Yitzhak Rabin came to power, a black market in settlement outposts has developed in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank].... Ariel Sharon is the first prime minister who decided to expose these things."

Labor Party Knesset Member Prof. Yuli Tamir, one of the founders of Peace Now, wrote in Maariv: "What, of all the things discussed by the report [on illegal settler outpost], did Sharon not know?"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "If Bush sticks to his line ... Israel will be required to leave the West Bank and Golan Heights. The settlers understand this and presumably so does Sharon."

Palestinian affairs correspondent and far-left Palestinian sympathizer Amira Hass opined in Ha'aretz: "The [separation] fence will never be completed, because even after its construction is finished, it will perpetuate the policy of annexation, usurpation and severance."

Liberal op-ed writer Yigal Sarna opined in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: "Palestine is another planet about whose real life 99 percent of Israelis know nothing about."

Block Quotes:

I. "End to Trailer Rule"

Diplomatic correspondent Ben Caspit wrote on page one of popular, pluralist Maariv (March 9): "The Sasson report was described Tuesday in Jerusalem as 'one of the most important state documents written in the past decade.' [Its author] Talia Sasson dismantled the Israeli banana republic, one banana after another. Since 1992, when Yitzhak Rabin came to power, a black market in settlement outposts has developed in Judea and Samaria [i.e. the West Bank] -- a diverse, sophisticated, covert and efficient industry, financed by the same government that is supposed to prevent it.... It can be said, and rightfully so, that Ariel Sharon was the originator and founder of this operation.... On the other hand, Ariel Sharon is the first prime minister who decided to expose these things. To anchor them in a special government document. To mark them. To show them to the world. If this is not a sign that the man has changed his path, there will be no other signs.... Now the ball is in the political court.... The settlers will yet lament the strategic historical error that drove them to stick to every settlement outpost, to fight for every trailer, to bring upon themselves the Sasson report and disengagement, instead of going for a compromise with Sharon when it was still possible, to evacuate the settlement outposts willingly and agree to the evacuation of three or four settlements in the Gaza Strip. Now all that is history. As is the Sasson report."

II. "The Real Culprit"

Labor Party Knesset Member Prof. Yuli Tamir, one of the founders of Peace Now, wrote in Maariv (March 9): "The Sasson report is no more than confirmation of what we already knew. The Israeli government, knowingly and deliberately, finances lawbreakers and generously extends to them the economic support that it denies to

young couples, terminal patients and senior citizens.... Only a public that is totally captivated by the charm of disengagement is willing to look aside, and relieve the real culprits of accountability.... What, of all the things discussed by the report, did Sharon not know? Did he not know that the illegal settlement outposts were flourishing? Did he not know that the Jewish Agency's Settlement Division was misusing its power and betraying the trust of the Jewish people by supporting the establishment of illegal settlement outposts, in contravention of U.S. law?.... Did he not fund, as housing minister, the employment of the engineers and architects who planned the construction? Was he not, in every public position he filled, at the forefront of the settlement activity in the territories? In a well-ordered country, the State Attorney's Office would be investigating the main culprit -- the prime minister. In Israel, the prime minister requests an objective report, comes out sharply against himself and searches for culprits.... The settlements have exploited the State of Israel, under Sharon's sponsorship and with his permission. The public should decide who is accountable for this. Let us hope it is not an unfortunate clerk who did not hear that the prime minister suddenly changed his tune."

III. "What's the Choice?"

Diplomatic correspondent Aluf Benn wrote in independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (March 9): "The Israeli right suffers from selective hearing. Its people cheer when Bush calls for democracy in the Arab world or a Syrian withdrawal from Lebanon. They ignore all the clauses about Israel, even when Bush declares a solution to the Israel-Palestinian dispute as the most burning issue on the international agenda. They prefer not to hear that. They forget that Israel is part of the Middle East, and that it also has to do its part to reshape it.... If Bush sticks to his line, and the regimes around Israel line up with the Americans and go through changes, Israel will be required to leave the West Bank and Golan Heights. The settlers understand this and presumably so does Sharon, even when he turns right, like he did last week, promising that [the West Bank settlements of] Hebron, Beit El and Shiloh will remain in Israel's hands. After all, just three years ago he was saying the exact same thing about Netzarim [in the Gaza Strip]."

IV. "The Fence Will Never Be Completed"

Palestinian affairs correspondent and far-left Palestinian sympathizer Amira Hass opined in Ha'aretz (March 9): "The construction of the separation fence is being carried out in the language of control that has evolved here since 1947, and has not been altered even in the years of the political negotiations at the end of the 20th century. In Israeli propaganda, Israel is the attacked victim, and therefore may do anything to protect itself. There is no correlation between the subjective feeling of the victim and Israel's objective -- military -- power and strong international status. The fence's route -- with or without the High Court's kosher stamp -- clearly promotes the intentions to annex Palestinian land. These intentions were not stopped in 1994, with the Oslo Accords, but accelerated.... The constructed fence is continuing in its energetic destruction, but the fence will never be completed, because even after its construction is finished, it will perpetuate the policy of annexation, usurpation and severance."

V. "The Elephant and the Cat"

Liberal op-ed writer Yigal Sarna opined in mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (March 9): "Those who tour the territories ... can understand that Israel is one-hundredfold stronger than the Palestinians, with enough military power to vanquish eight Palestines.... Those who tour the territories without official escorts understand the deceit behind Mofaz's descriptions of the Palestinian Authority as cunning, strong ... plotting, and in control of the situation and of a Palestinian nation that mischievously refuses to grant us a proper response to our painful concessions.... Palestine is another planet about whose real life 99 percent of Israelis know nothing about.... Israelis do not want to know about ... a huge prison where even the safety and stability of a normal jail do not apply.... Israelis do not want to know that the army prevents even passable Palestinian government -- a government that does not rule by itself and does not assume any responsibility.... Its elected chairman, who is devoid of authority ... quite flimsily rules under Shin Bet

supervision."

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